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A
L E T T E R

TO THE

Rev. Sir THOMAS BROUGHTON, Bart.

O F

BROUGHTON-HALL, in STAFFORDSHIRE.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT,

OPPOSITE BURLINGTON HOUSE, PICCADILLY:

MDCCLXXXIV.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

A
L E T T E R, &c.

LONDON, APRIL 1st, 1784.

DEAR and REVEREND SIR,

ALLOW me, in the name of the public,
as well as in my own, to thank you for the
very agreeable present you have sent us by the
post from Staffordshire. I have the pleasure to
inform you, that nothing was ever more chearfully
received. One party is as much edified by your

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zeal,

zeal, as the other is enlightened by your argument; and all concur in general admiration of your oratorical talents. But though your speech is well kept up and equally written, I desire to be indulged in pointing out to you those parts which strike me as peculiarly excellent, and which have been most successful with the public. Modest merit, like yours, does the virtuous act, and retires from the praise; but the applause of kings and ministers is not to be so rejected; it is not unfrequently followed by solid and permanent advantages, golden prebends! rich deaneries! and even bishoprics! and is by no means to be put upon a par with the sterile acclamations of the people, who have nothing to give but fair words, which, as the proverb emphatically, though somewhat grossly expresses it, butter no parsnips.

The trait of all others with which we are most struck, as tending at once to quiet the apprehensions

hensions of those silly persons who can suppose our liberties in any danger, is your assurance that we are in the full and actual possession of that *desideratum* in government, that political *maximum*, which, like the phoenix, has been supposed to exist only in imagination, “ A TRULY PATRIOT “ KING.” When objects are brought close to the eye, the vision becomes as indistinct, as when they are removed to a great distance : thus *we* are unfortunately deprived of the advantage of seeing Majesty in its true point of view by being too near, as the people of America were by being too far off. Staffordshire seems to be the exact point of perspective ; and the political world will be as much delighted with this happy discovery, as astronomers were with the first observation of the Georgian star.

But lest there should be restive spirits, not perfectly satisfied with this doctrine of a truly patriot king, you go on to assure us, that if the power
of

of the crown was to be increased, and the power of the people diminished, all this would be favourable to liberty : or, in your own words, “ that
 “ there is much more to fear from the democratic
 “ influence, than from the regal ; and the liberty
 “ of the people is ever as much endangered by
 “ the people’s encroachment on the rights of the
 “ crown, as by the crown’s encroachment on the
 “ rights of the people.”——This is plain speaking and much to the purpose ; but as there may be reasoners, who will perhaps think this position proves too much (because, if the liberties of the people would be increased by being diminished, they would be rendered greatest of all by being entirely taken away) it is much to be regretted that you did not favour us with the arguments generating a conclusion so useful to the cause in which we are engaged ; and which must have been full and satisfactory, since they convinced your acute and logical understanding.

Ah,

Ah, Sir Thomas! Sir Thomas! let me stop here to lament that we did not live in those good days, the *Saturnia regna*, when, as the song says, “loyalty had no harm in’t;” when churches and grand-jury-rooms refounded with DIVINE RIGHT, PASSIVE OBEDIENCE, NON-RESISTANCE, and many other such sound and wholesome doctrines. An honest man was not then obliged to conceal his loyalty under a pretended regard for the racially people. But take courage, my good friend, after a long night the dawn begins to appear; and if things go on as they have begun, the friends to the good old cause may soon hold up their heads as high again as ever.

But to return to your excellent Speech.—How splendid is your imagery! how happy your allusions! how chaste your expression! “A deluge
“of threatened evils derived from a novel political monster, the son of a bare-faced dæmon—

“A bill,

“ A bill, the first-born child of a monster, advancing with a dagger in one hand, and a bowl of poison in the other”—These, amongst a thousand others, are such towering flights, such *verba ardentia*, as would have charmed the ear of Athens, when eloquence

“ Wielded at will the fierce democracy,

“ Shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece

“ To Macedon and Artexerxes’ throne.”

If these are proofs of your excellence in the sublimer parts of oratory, it is with pleasure we observe that you can descend with equal success to the lower, though not less useful arts of a good speaker. We had endeavoured to make out as well as we could, though God knows by what sort of argument, that places and emoluments enjoyed in India, might, some how or other, affect the independency of parliament here ; but you, in
the

the true spirit of oratory, leaving the facts to shift for themselves, place at once the whole emoluments of India, which you fix at 2000000 a year, in the hands of the minister, and then shew him to us actually employed in bribing the house of commons with the money.—“ Will any
 “ man pretend to say, that it is possible to as-
 “ semble five hundred persons in a house of com-
 “ mons, of such pure and immaculate virtue,
 “ that two millions of money, judiciously dissemi-
 “ nated amongst them and their friends, without
 “ hurting their nice feelings, would not have a
 “ sure and certain effect.” How much more to the purpose is this than ill-founded proofs, and arguments by which no body is convinced.—Again, when you assert boldly, that “ the interference of
 “ the Lords was the effect of their own spirit and
 “ discernment,” how much better this is than allowing the fact to be otherwise, and going about to justify their conduct on principles which no

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person

person of common sense or feeling can possibly admit.

It is the privilege of great writers to be able to convey a volume in a short sentence or a single word. Thus, when you put us in mind that the ex-minister is “the son of the great public defaulter of unaccounted millions,” you furnish at once an excellent example of morality, and such a specimen of your theology, as shews that you have not studied your Old Testament in vain; and when, in reckoning up the different descriptions of which the enemies to our cause are composed, you included “*renegade* Jacobites,” what does not the single epithet *renegade* convey; for *renegade* being always used in a bad sense, and applied exclusively to those who have abandoned true, honest, and honourable principles, cannot be confounded with convert or proselyte. Thus you ingeniously contrive to give the most delicate

cate applause to the good old cause of jacobitism, so much fallen into disrepute of late, by a single term of reproach to those who have basely forsaken it's excellent and salutary principles. Afterwards, when you urge us to support the king and constitution, "against the most dangerous encroachments that have ever been attempted since the revolution," we, who have feelings congenial to your own, understand the sentence in its most obvious sense, and agree with you, that the revolution was a still greater encroachment upon the king and the constitution than that which has been just now so providentially frustrated; but as the phrase will also bear another meaning, and it is impossible to prove that you did not use the revolution as a mere point of time without any allusion to it as an event, you have reserved the power of explaining your sentiments one way for the really orthodox, and another for the weak brethren, whose faith is less masculine and robust. This has ever been a favourite and useful expedient

dient among divines, and your attempt to introduce it into politics deserves much praise.

Another very serviceable act, and which, though it may perhaps owe its origin to polemical divinity, has been long in use in controversies of all sorts, is to cite only so much of the sentence of your adversary as makes for your purpose, and to leave out whatever leads to soften or explain its obnoxious tendency. Thus, when you observe on Mr. Lee's expression, "that a charter is no-
 " thing but a piece of parchment with a seal
 " dangling to it," you very judiciously omit the rest of the sentence, "when compared with the
 " happiness of thirty millions of people," because this rendered it totally unfit for your purpose; but then, to make amends, you add a little flourish of your own in praise of charters, much more in point. Then when you choose to enliven your audience, and shew your talent for the *molle atque facelum*, how sportive and jocular is your definition
 of

of a gallows! “ A piece of wood with a man dangling to it:” not but that, between ourselves, a gallows is as much a gallows without a man hanging to it, as a pulpit is a pulpit without a parson in it.

Though your allusion to the resemblance of the present times to the beginning of the reign of Charles the First is, I have no doubt, managed according to the best theological practice, yet I am rather of opinion that it is safer for us not to touch at all upon this ticklish subject; for your declining to “ enter into the question how far the “ provocations and injuries the people received “ justified the proceedings of those days,” may be construed into an opinion that you allow there are situations in which kings may be resisted, a position which I think we ought by no means to allow to the “ republican levellers of these “ days.”

In my frequent perusals of your Speech, a thought
has

has sometimes struck me with which I am rather alarmed. This is, lest the adversary should apply some of the choice flowers of your eloquence, with little or no alterations, to their own use. Thus, when you say, “ Are we poor country-folks such
 “ fools that we cannot see if a three-legged stool
 “ is out of order, it is never the way to make it
 “ stand firmer by paring and planing away two
 “ of its legs, and making the third as high or as
 “ big again as it ought to be”—may not those who want to make us believe that the royal leg is too large, and the leg of the commons too weak and small, send back this very same wooden stool at our heads? But however this may be, now we are on the subject of this tripod, I must observe, that I think it high time for this old fashioned vulgar piece of furniture to be laid aside. It has long been a most unsafe sort of a seat, and whether it received an irreparable injury when Lord Bute first pulled it from under Lord Chatham, or whether it is really rotten and worn
 out,

out, I know not; but nobody has ventured to sit down upon it since, whose posteriors have not presently come to the ground. George Grenville, Lord Rockingham, the Duke of Grafton, &c. &c. were all laid sprawling, when, after leaning against the throne, and trying to relieve themselves by every change of position, they from mere fatigue were induced to sit down upon it.—Lord North being kept on his legs by the American war, and possessing the faculty of taking that kind of repose which the French call *dormir debout*, did not make any trial of it.—The last minister thought he had spliced up the weak and broken leg so well, that he ventured to rest his whole person upon it, but on a slight kick from a great person who loves a practical joke, down came the stool once more; and as this minister had an uncommonly broad bottom, and was of great weight, and had contrived nothing to catch at to ease his fall, he fell with so much force that the stool seems to be rendered absolutely unfit for
future

future use. The remnants of it should by all means be laid up in the royal cabinet of British antiquities; and the minister for the future may sit either on a *wool-sack*, or on the lowest step of the throne.

But to return to your Speech—That you may see at once what I mean, cast your eye over the following columns.

P R O.

“ If it is sound con-
 “ stitutional doctrine to
 “ advance, that none but
 “ the minister who has
 “ the confidence of the
 “ House of Commons
 “ is fit to be minister,
 “ the King’s prerogative
 “ of appointment is vir-
 “ tually taken away, and
 “ it

C O N.

If it is sound and con-
 stitutional doctrine to ad-
 vance, that the minister
 who has not the confi-
 dence of the House of
 Commons, is fit to be
 minister, the Commons
 power of control is vir-
 tually taken away, and
 it is in effect placing
 the

P R O.

C O N.

“ it is in effect placing the whole weight of
 “ the whole weight of authority in one of the
 “ authority in one of the three estates of the realm.
 “ three estates of the
 “ realm.

“ The would-be mi- The would-be mini-
 “ nister, who can procure nister, who can procure
 “ a majority, by means a majority by means of
 “ of rotten boroughs, rotten boroughs, and a
 “ and a certain secret certain SECRET INFLU-
 “ influence of promised ENCE OF PROMISED PEER-
 “ peerages and promised AGES, and PROMISED PLA-
 “ places ; he, I say, Sir, CES ; he, I say, Sir, will
 “ will become minister become minister pleni-
 “ plenipotentiary and potentiary and perpe-
 “ perpetual, till it shall tual, till it shall please
 “ please the Almighty the Almighty to deliver
 “ to deliver the nation this nation from him.
 “ from him.”

“ Thou

Thou

C

P R O.

“ Thou bearer of the
 “ name of king, acknow-
 “ ledge that you have
 “ done wrong in appoint-
 “ ing any minister but
 “ myself, or him whom
 “ I shall nominate; re-
 “ sign your crown, your
 “ rights, your preroga-
 “ tives, implicitly to me;
 “ I only am wise, I only
 “ am able, I only am
 “ the truly good, the vir-
 “ tuous friend of the
 “ constitution.

“ Forming, Sir, the
 “ most truly disinterest-
 “ ed, the most deliberate,
 “ and

C O N.

Thou bearer of the
 name of a House of Com-
 mons, acknowledge that
 you have done wrong
 in not supporting any
 minister whom I shall
 nominate; resign your
 power, your rights, your
 privileges, implicitly to
 me; I am only wise, I
 am only able, I am only
 truly good, the virtuous
 friend of the constitu-
 tion.

Forming, Sir, the most
 truly disinterested, the
 most deliberate, and best
 judgment

P R O.

C O N.

<p> “ and best judgment my “ poor abilities will per- “ mit on the present “ view of public affairs, “ I am firmly persuaded, “ that the plain question, “ stripped of all its guises, “ and reduced to simple “ truth, which agitates “ and threatens to tear “ this whole kingdom, is, “ whether an individual “ shall talk himself into “ the possession of an “ unlimited, unconstitu- “ tional power, through “ the medium of the “ house of commons, or “ whether the three e- “ states of the realm shall “ be </p>	<p> judgment my poor abili- ties will permit on the present view of public affairs, I am firmly per- suaded, that the plain question, stripped of all its guises, and reduced to simple truth, which agitates and threatens to tear this whole kingdom, is, whether an individual shall talk himself into the possession of an unlimit- ed, unconstitutional pow- er, through the medium of the secret influence of the crown, or whether the three estates of the realm shall be supported in their distinct, just, legal, con- </p>
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P R O.

C O N.

“ be supported in their constitutional, undoubt-
 “ distinct, just, legal, con- ed, undeniable rights,
 “ stitutional, undoubt- without usurpation on
 “ ed, undeniable rights, each other?
 “ without usurpation on
 “ each other ?”

Here, Sir Thomas, I shall, however reluctantly,
 take my leave of you, with a sincere wish that
 your labours in the only profitable vineyard of the
 Lord may meet with the reward they so eminently
 deserve. Till we had seen your Speech, notwith-
 standing the known loyalty of Staffordshire, and
 “ the immense debt that county owes to the firm-
 “ nefs and wisdom of our most gracious sovereign,”
 we were rather at a loss to account for the *force* of
 their address; but when we are informed that it
 was prepared by you, our wonder gives way to
 grateful admiration.

Adieu once more, my dear Sir. May the palace-
 gates of Eccleshall, or Chester, soon lift up their
 heads to receive you !

F I N I S.

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